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# Implementation of the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes

## Report of the Secretary-General

*Summary*

The present report, submitted in response to General Assembly resolution 72/145, focuses on recent family trends and initiatives towards the implementation of the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes by Member States, United Nations entities and civil society.

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# I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 72/145, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report at its seventy-fourth session, through the Commission for Social Development and the Economic and Social Council, on the implementation of the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes by Member States and by agencies and bodies of the United Nations system.

2. In that resolution, the General Assembly called upon Member States and the United Nations system, in consultation with civil society and other relevant stakeholders, to continue providing information on their activities, including on good practices, in support of the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes, to be included in the report of the Secretary-General.

3. Furthermore, the General Assembly invited "Member States to invest in a variety of family-oriented policies and programmes ... to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development".

4. The present report includes an analysis of family trends, with a focus on poverty and social protection, work family balance and unpaid work and the role of families in inclusive societies (section II). It presents information on initiatives undertaken by Member States (section III) and the United Nations system (section IV) based on responses to a note verbale sent by the Secretariat. The report also outlines relevant initiatives of civil society organizations that cooperated with Division for Inclusive Social Development of the Department for Economic and Social Affairs on family issues (section IV).

# II. Family trends

## A. Poverty and social protection

5. Families with young children are the most vulnerable to extreme poverty, with research indicating that more than 20 per cent of children below the age of 5 in the developing world live in extremely poor households.[1] The intergenerational transfer of poverty continues, with emerging data demonstrating that children are more than twice as likely to live in extreme poverty as adults, with 385 million children living on less than $1.90 a day.[2]

6. Nevertheless, the proportion of the world's families living in extreme poverty declined overall during the past two decades, from 26.9 per cent in 2000 to 9.2 per cent in 2017.[3] This success has been attributed by governments in large part to the expansion of social protection coverage, including cash transfers and other programmes targeting families living in poverty. For example, evaluations of conditional cash transfers for families with children point to multiple positive effects, including improvements in living conditions, a lower poverty incidence, increased spending on food and better access to education and health care. The transfers also

[1] World Bank and United Nations Children's Fund, *Ending Extreme Poverty: A Focus on Children* (New York, 2016).

[2] Eurostat, "Europe 2020 indicators: poverty and social exclusion", May 2018. Available at https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Europe_2020_indicators_-_poverty_and_social_exclusion#Which_groups_are_at_greater_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion.3F (accessed on 26 November 2018).

[3] United Nations, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2018* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.18.I.6).

facilitate family investment in human capital and have the potential to enhance gender equality.[4]

7. In 2017, the existence of functioning national social protection systems was reported by 138 United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) country offices (up from 124 in 2014). UNICEF data indicate that approximately 182 million children worldwide were covered by government cash transfer programmes, an increase from 146 million in 2014.[5]

8. Notwithstanding such positive trends, as of 2016, only 45 per cent of the world's population was effectively covered by at least one social protection benefit.[3] Estimates of social protection designed to address poverty and exclusion indicate that only a quarter of households globally have access to cash benefits. For children, the coverage is highly uneven, with almost two thirds of them, or 1.3 billion, lacking social protection coverage.[6]

9. Moreover, evaluations indicate that cash transfers alone are insufficient to lift families out of poverty. Access to basic social services is essential. Although fiscal constraints make it challenging to expand social protection coverage, research indicates that progressive taxation for redistribution to protect the most vulnerable individuals and families with young children could remedy the situation.[4]

## B. Work-family balance and unpaid work

10. Measures facilitating work-family balance and their uptake by men and women strengthen gender equality in the labour market and the workplace. The European Commission outlines several elements contributing to work-life balance, such as childcare services, parental and family leave, tax-benefit systems and work arrangements. The benefits of these policy instruments are enhanced when they are implemented together.

11. The European Union, in its Council directive 2010/18/EU, required member States to provide a minimum of four months of parental leave per parent, with the leave lasting up to three years or more. Additional measures to encourage fathers to take parental leave, through non-transferable quotas or bonuses for families with both parents taking parental leave or flexible options such as part-time uptake, have been introduced in some countries.

12. Flexible working arrangements, including staggered hours, working time banking, part-time work, flex-time schedules and telecommuting, have been introduced and expanded in European Union member States in recent years.[7]

13. The recognition of unpaid work, done mostly by women, in all regions of the world is an aspect of work-family balance gaining in visibility. On the basis of data from 90 countries between 2000 and 2016, women spent approximately three times as many hours in unpaid domestic and care work as men.[3] Data from 17 Latin American countries indicate that women in the region spend between one fifth and one third of their time each week on unpaid domestic and care work, with men

[4] United Nations Children's Fund, *Key Findings on Families, Family Policy and the Sustainable Development Goals: Synthesis Report* (Florence, 2018).

[5] United Nations Children's Fund, *Annual Results Report 2017: Social Inclusion* (New York, 2017).

[6] Based on the response by the United Nations Children's Fund to the note verbale.

[7] European Institute for Gender Equality, *Poverty, Gender and Intersecting Inequalities in the EU. Review of the Implementation of Area A: Women and Poverty of the Beijing Platform for Action* (Vilnius, 2016).

spending approximately 10 per cent of their time on such work.[8] Moreover, owing to the size and dependency ratios of poorer households, women in such families spend up to 65 hours per week on unpaid work, while women in the top quintile spend 20 to 40 hours per week, depending on the country. For men, there is no significant difference between households of different incomes, indicating that the gender gap is wider and more unfair in lower income households, owing to an overlapping economic gap.[9]

14. Even when women can reduce time spent on domestic chores through purchases of services and technology, the gender gap in Latin America does not diminish, and there remains a wide gap between the number of hours spent by men and women on unpaid work, irrespective of age, marital status or occupation. There is therefore a growing need for policies that promote women's access to the labour market or other sources of income, to be accompanied by policies encouraging the sharing of responsibilities at home.[9]

## C. Families and inclusive societies

15. Families play an indispensable role in promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development through their contributions to raising the next generation of healthy and productive citizens. Although families are critical to creating peace at individual and household levels, they may need help in developing skills to build peaceful relations.[10]

16. The eradication of all forms of violence is an integral part of promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 16, specifically its target 16.2. Research indicates that close to 8 in 10 children between the ages of 1 and 14 in 81 primarily developing countries are subjected to some form of psychological aggression and/or physical punishment on a regular basis at home. In most of these countries, more than half of children experience violent forms of discipline.[11]

17. Although the practice of violent discipline of children is widespread, there is a growing consensus that States have a role to play in bringing it to an end. Helping parents to understand the importance of positive, non-violent discipline in child development and of close and effective parent-child communication contributes to the reduction of harsh discipline practices. Parenting education interventions focused on prevention can be delivered in family and community settings and tend to be more effective when challenges faced by families are addressed at the same time. It is also essential to confront the social acceptability of corporal punishment at the community level through public engagement.[6]

18. Promoting peaceful and inclusive societies includes ensuring that all have a legal identity, including birth registration (target 16.9 of the Sustainable Development Goals). These stipulations are particularly relevant to families. Globally, 73 per cent of children under 5 years of age have had their births registered, while the proportion

[8] Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean, Social Panorama of Latin America 2016 (Santiago, 2017).

[9] Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean, *Equality and Women's Autonomy in the Sustainable Development Agenda* (Santiago, 2016).

[10] United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division for Inclusive Social Development, *The Role of Families and Family Policies in Achieving Inclusive Societies: Focus on Sustainable Development Goals 16 and 11* (New York, 2018). Available at **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** (accessed on 26 November 2018).

[11] United Nations, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2018* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.18.I.6). Data from 2005 to 2017.

is only 46 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa.[3] The estimated number of unregistered children up to 14 years of age stands at 625 million.[12]

19. Legal identity is also growing in complexity in high-income countries faced with migration and refugee flows. Recent conflicts had displaced 65.5 million people as of the end of 2016. Estimates done by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees indicate that 10 million individuals were without a nationality or at risk of statelessness at the end of 2016, although official government statistics indicated that there were only 3.2 million stateless individuals from 75 countries. Displacement has serious family consequences, including family separation and unaccompanied minors. With no family and legal protection, children are vulnerable to various forms of exploitation and violence.[10]

20. Alarmingly, the number of children migrating unaccompanied by guardians has been growing in recent years. Estimates indicate a recent five-fold increase, compared with the period 2010–2011. The number of unaccompanied and separated children who applied for asylum outside the European Union grew from 4,000 in 2010 to 19,000 in 2015. In Europe, the number increased more than nine-fold between 2010 and 2015. The number of children apprehended at the United States of America-Mexico border stood at 60,000 in 2016, compared with 40,000 in 2015.[13]

21. The right to family reunification is enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families. In addition, the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms stipulates the protection of family life and the right to marry. Moreover, directive 2003/86 of the Council of the European Union affirms the right of third-country nationals to family reunification.

22. Immigration policies at the national level, however, interpret these instruments in the context of their socioeconomic situation and establish their own criteria for migrant inclusion. One deepening trend is managed migration leading to the creation of migrant categories. Another trend is linked to growing racism and xenophobia during the past two decades. Such trends have resulted in more restrictive immigration, depending on nationality, skill level, age, income and other variables. Moreover, family migrants, especially parents and grandparents, are often seen as obstacles to integration and possible burdens to society, while their children are regarded as valuable human capital.[14]

## III. Family policies and programmes

23. The strengthening of national-level institutional frameworks responsible for formulating, implementing and monitoring family policies and programmes remains an important objective of the International Year of the Family. Other areas of intervention in accordance with the follow-up to International Year of the Family processes include family poverty reduction, work-family balance, social inclusion and family research promotion. National-level efforts by Member States in the above areas are highlighted below.

[12] World Bank, Identification for Development (ID4D) database, 2017 global data set (accessed on 26 November 2018).

[13] Migration Data Portal, "Child migrants". Available at https://migrationdataportal.org/themes/child-migrants (accessed on 26 November 2018).

[14] Denise L. Spitzer "Family migration policies and social integration", paper prepared for the United Nations Expert Group Meeting on family policies for inclusive societies, New York, 15–16 May 2018.

24. There is a growing realization that family policies addressing critical areas of development contribute to the achievement of International Year of the Family objectives and Sustainable Development Goals relating to poverty, hunger, health, education and gender equality. Targeting families with young children through cash transfers, child benefits and other measures are regarded as effective policy interventions for poverty reduction. Moreover, governments have increased their investment in work-family balance as a tool to improve gender equality. Parenting education features more prominently in government efforts towards social inclusion and intergenerational solidarity. In terms of research promotion, limited progress has been observed and more efforts are needed.

## A. Institutional frameworks

25. In Hungary, the State secretariat for family and youth affairs of the Ministry of Human Capacities is responsible for managing family policy. The main goal of the policy is to achieve a demographic balance through stable, comprehensive, targeted and flexible family policy, adaptable to changing needs and conditions.

26. In Italy, the National Fund for Family Policies implements activities supporting families, such as financing work-life balance programmes and testing initiatives to reduce the costs of services for large families. The Fund also finances the formulation of the National Plan for the Family and the reorganization of family centres. These centres offer relationship and parenting counselling and focus on child protection, the transition to adulthood and intergenerational solidarity.

27. In Luxembourg, the Ministry of Family and Integration oversees family policies. The 2017 fiscal reform was especially intended to benefit single-headed households. The National Plan for Strengthening Families 2016–2021 of Peru provides guidance on family policy implementation, while in the Sudan, the National Strategy for the Family is targeted at older persons, children and women through anti-poverty programmes. In the Russian Federation, a long-term socioeconomic and demographic development strategy is used to consider challenges facing families, while its National Family Policy Plan (2014–2025) is aimed at, among other things, improving the quality of life for families and increasing the role of the family in society.

28. The Council for Family Affairs in Saudi Arabia works towards strengthening and promoting the family's role in society and maintaining a strong and cohesive family that cares for its children and is committed to religious and moral values.

29. In South Africa, family policy is based on the White Paper on Families. Among its strategic objectives is advocacy for a family-focused, rather than individual-focused, approach in national development and poverty-reduction policies and programmes. Improving the economic capacity of families through financial and material assistance, access to employment and financial services are key. Ensuring sufficient minimum income and an adequate standard of living for all families, especially those in vulnerable situations, through a variety of social protection policies and programmes is pursued at the national level.

30. In several countries, efforts are under way to modify family laws to safeguard the rights of women and ensure the best interest of the child and achieve full harmonization with relevant international human rights instruments, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In Cyprus, consensual divorce and joint child custody with equal time for both parents have been introduced. Parents are now obliged to participate in educational or therapeutic programmes to ensure good spousal and intergenerational relations.

## B. Poverty, hunger and social exclusion reduction

31. The National Plan of Social Protection of Argentina focuses on vulnerable families through cash transfers and community development. Since 2016, the Government has promoted the National Early Childhood Plan through numerous education programmes. For example, centres for child malnutrition prevention and recuperation, in cooperation with CONIN (*Cooperadoras de la Nutrición Infantil*) child centres, offer nutrition and education about a healthy diet for children 0–5 years old and their mothers. Family visits and community activities are also offered to vulnerable households with children 0–4 years old, helping them with child development issues. Since 2016, 75,000 families have been assisted.

32. In Azerbaijan, a series of programmes on poverty reduction, employment strategy and overall socioeconomic development were adopted to improve the quality of life of the rural poor and marginalized urban dwellers. Targeted social assistance for low-income families has been offered since 2006. A new allowance for large families with more than five children was adopted in 2013. In Belarus, social protection policies support families with children, offer services to families and facilitate access to jobs.

33. To reduce poverty in China, the coverage of social security has been further expanded in the areas of urban employee pension, basic medical, unemployment, work injury, maternity and urban and rural residents' pension insurance schemes, with 1.3 billion people participating in the three basic medical insurance plans. The pension insurance system has been reformed, and a plan for transferring some State-owned capital to enrich social security funds was officially launched. Efforts are under way to meet the growing care needs of older persons and children, with a 3 per cent annual growth of facilities offering services for older persons.

34. In Djibouti, the 2017 National Strategy of Social Protection supports human resources development to combat poverty and inequalities. In 2016, the National Programme of Family Solidarity was launched, focusing on cash transfers, access to health care and quality education, employment creation and microfinance. Currently, 16,000 families have access to those benefits.

35. The Family Support Strategy in Ecuador is targeted at family recipients of the human development bonus and is aimed at poverty reduction by facilitating household access to State services in order to strengthen family capacities.

36. An emblematic tool of the family support system in Hungary is its family tax benefit. The country allocates 1.1 per cent of its gross domestic product for family allowance and offers housing grant loans with subsidized interest, as well as State-supported housing savings programmes. Its family home-start subsidy benefits families with children.

37. In Italy, in line with its National Plan to Fight Poverty, as of 2018, an inclusion income programme is targeted at families with children and offers a personalized planning for social and job inclusion.

38. The Programme of Advancement through Health and Education of the Social Protection Strategy in Jamaica is intended to maintain the well-being of families, with a focus on vulnerable family members, including pregnant and lactating women. Under the Programme, a conditional cash transfer programme has introduced a benefit review mechanism to review grants to beneficiaries on a biannual basis. A 30 per cent increase in some benefits was granted in 2017.

39. The policy of the Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity of Malta continues to focus on complementing financial benefits with a

range of measures and initiatives that not only combat poverty, but also promote active inclusion and empower vulnerable groups to become more autonomous from the State.

40. In Mexico, the social inclusion programme PROSPERA, which is aimed at improving capacities in nutrition, health and education, benefited more than 6.5 million families as of the end of 2017. Its 2018 iteration contains 37 programmes focusing on, among other things, nutrition, childcare, workers' rights, education, financial inclusion, violence prevention and livelihoods.

41. Single mothers with young children run the greatest risk of poverty in the Netherlands. The Single Super Mom Foundation, supported by the Government, helps to lift single mothers out of poverty to labour participation, reaching 32,000 women weekly through an online platform. The follow-up project "Dare to Do!" is aimed at developing new forms of online services that meet the specific needs and possibilities of this target group.

42. The cash transfer programme in Poland, Family 500+, contributed to the reduction of extreme poverty from 6.5 per cent in 2016 to 4.3 per cent in 2017. The Good Start Programme, which provides support for school expenses, benefitted 4.6 million students in 2018. The Large Family Card programme offers price reductions on travel and recreation, as well as insurance and other services, in collaboration with participating enterprises.

43. Since 2016, Saudi Arabia has been carrying out programmes for working families and the empowerment of the self-employed. Social security benefits have been raised for families. Women-headed households have a priority when applying for housing support.

44. In Serbia, the law on financial support for families with children regulates benefits for families with children with special needs and disabilities, as well as for children without parental care. The family counsellor service supports families with children at risk of relocation due to possible neglect or abuse. In South Africa, the Social Assistance Act provides for various types of social assistance, such as child support, foster child, disability, older persons and social relief of distress grants to vulnerable families.

45. The 2016 strategy to overcome poverty in Ukraine, which focused on households with children, has resulted in a 17 per cent drop in poverty rates in such households. Social assistance centres for families, children and young people concentrate on vulnerable families and offer employment and legal, housing and other services.

## C. Work-family balance and the empowerment of women and girls

46. In Belarus, parental leave with full pay is offered until the child is 3 years of age for mothers or fathers, while a family capital programme offers $10,000 upon the birth of a third and subsequent children. In 2017, Djibouti introduced quality and affordable community childcare centres in an effort to promote work-family balance.

47. The 2015 law on fair employment and work-family balance in Ecuador protects the right to social protection of individuals engaged in unpaid work at home. The "Growing up with our children" programme offers weekly visits to help vulnerable families with early childhood education based on a rights approach, with a focus on intergenerational inclusion and gender equality.

48. In Italy, parental leave was modified to include adoption or fostering up to the age of 12. Since 2016, working women have been able to obtain stipends for

babysitting services or to cover the costs of public childcare services in lieu of parental leave. Mandatory paternity leave for fathers was extended to four days. Within three years, public administrations will have to allow at least 10 per cent of employees, if they so request, to use flexible working arrangements, ensuring that employees who use them do not suffer penalties in career progression. Family Audit, a quality label certification for companies supporting work-family life balance, can be obtained by public and private businesses.

49. The National Policy for Gender Equality in Jamaica ensures that gender issues are mainstreamed throughout all institutions of the State and incorporated into family policies. Its Flexible Work Arrangement Act facilitates and promotes work-family balance.

50. In Hungary, the Job Protection Action Plan offers incentives to employers to hire women, those with young children and those experiencing long-term unemployment. Children's day-care facilities grew by 50 per cent between 2010 and 2018.

51. Latvia implemented a pilot project on the provision of flexible working hours for employees who work non-standard hours, to support flexible childcare for children of parents with such work hours. The project is aimed at improving the work-life balance of employees with potential benefits for employers in terms of higher productivity and decreased absenteeism. Its evaluation indicated better time management and tackling of work-family conflicts. It also led to improvements in job satisfaction.[15]

52. Luxembourg reformed parental leave provisions, increasing the length of maternity and sick child leaves. In Mexico, the Social Protection Programme for Female-headed Households offers social protection and supports education. New schemes ensure flexible work arrangements, care for dependents and paternity leave.

53. Peru carried out awareness-raising activities on responsible fatherhood under the Fatherhood Platform. New laws prohibiting discrimination in pay and advancing paternity leaves were introduced in 2017–2018.

54. In Poland, more stable, longer-duration contracts and a higher minimum wage were introduced to promote stable employment and better working conditions, which are considered to contribute not only to better work-family balance, but also to demographic stability.

55. The coverage of childcare facilities for 0–3 years olds in Portugal increased by 84 per cent between 2006 and 2017, and a cooperation protocol was signed with private non-profit organizations for the provision of childcare subsidized by relevant ministries. The Equality is Quality award recognizes companies and other employers with good policies in gender equality and work-life balance.

56. The Russian Federation introduced a maternity leave allowance equalling 100 per cent of women's median income of the two previous years for the period ranging from 140 to 194 days. Full maternity protection in the workplace is guaranteed in Saudi Arabia, with civil service regulations prohibiting dismissal for any reasons relating to marriage or pregnancy. Employment programmes for women offer subsidized day-care services for up to 80 per cent of working women until their children are 4 years old.

57. In 2018, Ukraine launched a new project on social protection for families with children and on responsible parenthood. To realize the right of children to family life,

[15] Government of Latvia, Ministry of Welfare, "Balancing work and family life". Available at http://darbsungimene.lv/en (accessed on 26 November 2018).

new benefits were introduced for adoptive parents, including parental leave. Flexible working arrangements, previously only available to women, were extended to men with family responsibilities.

## D. Social inclusion

58. In Argentina, to enhance gender equality, social integration and intergenerational solidarity, teen leadership and rights promotion, community centres offer capacity development workshops for children, young people and their families. The Federal Council of Older Persons supports intergenerational programmes, such as Experience Counts, which promotes the exchange of knowledge and experience between young people and older persons.

59. Azerbaijan launched Family Academy discussions with medical professionals and community leaders on such topics as relationship formation, family budget management, the preparation of young people for family life and intergenerational dialogue in order to support the State family policy and promote the institution of the family.

60. The National Policy for Senior Citizens of Jamaica enhances family support systems and community solidarity under the thematic area of family integration and intergenerational transfers. It promotes the engagement of older persons in their families and respect for dignity within families and provides targeted social assistance to senior citizens identified as primary caregivers of children or persons with disabilities. In Luxembourg, schools, young people and senior centres participate in intergenerational projects aimed at exchanging experiences and knowledge.

61. In Serbia, 2017 was declared the Year of Intergenerational Solidarity, with events raising awareness of the importance of intergenerational cooperation. The Council for the Improvement of Intergenerational Cooperation and Solidarity was established, with the aim of launching initiatives to improve cooperation with State authorities and humanitarian organizations and to expand current regulations governing social security provisions for children and older persons.

## E. Parenting education

62. In 2017, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Belarus, in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), organized research workshops on the international programme Generations and Gender, focusing on family formation, the stability of family relations and childbearing in changing socioeconomic conditions.

63. In Burkina Faso, the national parenting education programme for early childhood education for the period 2016–2020 is aimed at ensuring that the needs of the child are met. The law protecting and promoting the rights of older persons in the areas of health, social security, housing, recreation, culture and communication also focuses on the prevention of social exclusion of older persons.

64. In Jamaica, a second phase of a parenting programme was launched in 2018, focusing on nutrition, budgeting and discipline for parents of children between 2 and 6 years of age. An early stimulation programme focuses on the needs of children with disabilities and is intended to promote strong intergenerational interaction. It offers parenting workshops and family counselling. Through its community-based interventions, it encourages support through parent-teacher and citizen associations, church groups and other collaborative community settings.

65. A National Strategic Policy for Positive Parenting for the period 2016–2024 is being implemented in Malta. Positive parenting refers to the parents prioritizing children's best interests to help them to grow in an environment that is free from violence and conducive to their healthy development, while providing guidance and support. The policy is aimed at building and sustaining a positive culture and infrastructure for parents and their children, in which parents are supported to fulfil their role to the best of their abilities. Similarly, a project on positive parenting is being developed in Portugal with several areas of intervention to meet the needs of children and young people.

66. In the Russian Federation, the web-based School for Modern Parents, which publishes informational, methodological and legal materials on parental education, was created in 2018. The implementation of regional and municipal models and programmes on family development and parental education is currently under way.

67. The National Parenting Programme in South Africa is intended to improve communication between children and parents. It helps parents to communicate effectively with their children using discipline without resorting to corporal punishment. An Integrated Parenting Framework to improve parenting skills and a Fatherhood Strategy emphasizing the role of men in families are also being implemented.

### F. Research and awareness-raising

68. Research projects on family and marriage institutions, the role of intergenerational relations in the formation of society, family values in mass media and related topics have been carried out in Azerbaijan. Awareness-raising campaigns have focused on various aspects of healthy lifestyles, including the dangers of drug addiction. A large project on the role of the modern family in the development of society relating to work-family issues was launched in cooperation with the Trade Union Confederation.

69. In Burkina Faso, research projects on domestic violence and child marriage were conducted. Family-oriented policies and programmes, however, cannot be evaluated owing to a lack of funds.

70. In Portugal, a national survey on time use by men and women and focusing mainly on unpaid work contributed to evidence-based policymaking in the areas of gender equality and work-life balance.

71. In Saudi Arabia, the National Centre of Social Studies and Research and the National Observatory for Women provide advisory studies and research and monitor the participation of women in development.

## IV. United Nations system and civil society initiatives

### A. United Nations Children's Fund

72. UNICEF considers family-friendly policies central to creating environments in which children can thrive and reach their potential. On the other hand, it acknowledges that such policies often receive limited attention both in global debates and in policy action in many countries.

73. UNICEF advocates expanding child-sensitive social protection, including coverage of cash transfers for children and families. It considers social protection measures, from cash transfer programmes to social welfare services, indispensable to

addressing child and family poverty in all dimensions. It engages with countries to generate evidence on child poverty and vulnerability and demonstrate how social protection programmes can reduce child poverty and improve well-being. UNICEF provides technical support to introduce national cash transfer programming that includes diagnostics, registries, monitoring and evaluation systems and decentralized capacity development.

74. UNICEF also works with several governments to support women's and girls' empowerment and improve gender equity through social protection. This work goes beyond targeting transfers to women and girls to also address structural constraints. Activities comprise measuring the gender-disaggregated impact of social protection programmes, monitoring unintended consequences of social protection programming, which may exacerbate gender inequities, and tailoring new and existing programmes to maximize equitable outcomes for women and children.

75. UNICEF promotes parenting education focused on positive discipline. It recommends that governments ensure universal access to information on positive parenting and implement educational programmes to promote the adoption of non-violent child disciplinary practices.

76. Moreover, UNICEF continues to be engaged in the research into and evaluation of family-orientated policies and programmes through topical research, data development and evaluation studies. The studies focus on cross-cutting issues, such as contributions to evidence to support monitoring and meeting the family-relevant Sustainable Development Goals or more direct evaluations of various family-orientated policies and programmes.

## B. United Nations Population Fund

77. By partnering with governments, civil society and the private sector, UNFPA works to support the development of policies and action to benefit diverse families, including through the expansion and development of maternal and reproductive health care, access to family planning, boosting access to quality education, the promotion of gender equality within families and better working conditions for women.

78. UNFPA works with men as family and community members. The School of Husbands strategy in the Niger involves men in health promotion and in fostering a behavioural change at the community level. Through participation in the programme, husbands are taking a more active role in the health care of their families and communities. An evaluation of the programme observed improved reproductive health indicators, with rises in deliveries assisted by skilled personnel, prenatal and postnatal consultations and family planning.

79. UNFPA and EngenderHealth, through the latter's Men as Partners programme, work with men to challenge traditional gender roles and attitudes about "what makes a man", enhance men's awareness of and support for their partners' reproductive health, increase men's access to and use of reproductive health services and mobilize men to participate in promoting gender equity and taking a stand against gender-based violence.

## C. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

80. The equitable redistribution of unpaid care work between men and women and among families, the State and the market, as well as comprehensive policies promoting work-life balance and the recognition of diverse forms of families, have been key concerns and priorities contained in the Regional Gender Agenda, agreed

upon during the Regional Conferences on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, which have been held during the past 40 years.[16]

81. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has reviewed and assessed policies relating to work-family balance in the region and, through the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean, compiled a list of existing care legislation at the national and subnational levels.[17] In addition, ECLAC has published a list of existing regulations on maternity, paternity and parental leaves in several countries in the region, as well as an analysis of care legislation adopted between 2015 and 2017 in the region.[18]

82. ECLAC has supported governments in creating gender information systems to quantify and value unpaid work, given that its economic valuation is useful in designing, monitoring and evaluating employment policies. The information is also useful for social security policies, given that many of the gaps in women's contributions are due to their time devoted exclusively to unpaid work.[19]

## D. Department of Economic and Social Affairs

83. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs carried out activities to raise awareness of the importance of family policies for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets through the Division for Inclusive Social Development, which serves as its focal point for the United Nations system.

84. In 2018, the Division for Inclusive Social Development organized an Expert Group Meeting on family policies for inclusive societies focusing on the role of families and family policies in achieving selected targets of Sustainable Development Goals 11 and 16. Experts discussed regional perspectives on the issues above with topics focusing on family-oriented migration policies, inclusive policies for families with members with disabilities and indigenous families, as well as inclusive education and urbanization, among others. Detailed recommendations from the meeting are available on the Division website.[20]

85. The 2018 observance of the International Day of Families, on the theme "Families and inclusive societies", focused on the relevance of families and family policies for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 16. Presentations centred on current trends in social inclusion and regional perspectives on family-oriented approaches to achieve socially inclusive societies.[21] Another event commemorating the International Day organized by the Division for Inclusive Social Development, organized in collaboration with the International Federation for Family Development and UNICEF, saw the launch of a recently concluded global research project entitled "SDGs and families". The event focused on cross-cutting issues affecting family policy development for the achievement of Sustainable Development

[16] Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, *40 Years of the Regional Gender Agenda* (Santiago, 2017).

[17] Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean, "Care-related policies and laws", regulations database. Available at https://oig.cepal.org/en/laws/care-related-policies-laws (accessed on 26 November 2018).

[18] Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, *Institucionalidad Social en América Latina y el Caribe* (Santiago, 2017).

[19] Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, *Equality and Women's Autonomy in the Sustainable Development Agenda* (Santiago, 2016).

[20] See www.un.org/development/desa/family/meetings-events/family-policies-for-inclusive-societies.html.

[21] See www.un.org/development/desa/family/international-day-of-families/2018idf.html.

Goals 1–5, 9 and 16. Experts offered recommendations for integrating family interests into social policymaking.[22]

86. Several side events of the Commission for Social Development were organized by various stakeholders, in cooperation with the Division for Inclusive Social Development. The Doha International Family Institute organized a briefing, in cooperation with the Permanent Mission of Qatar, entitled "Focusing on families to support the implementation of the SDGs".[23] The event presented findings of the international Expert Group Meeting entitled "Integrating a family perspective in the SDGs in Arab countries: aspirations and challenges".[24] A high-level panel organized by the Permanent Mission of Hungary, in cooperation with the International Federation for Family Development, focused on the role of family policies in eradicating poverty and highlighted policy-based approaches to empowering families. The Federation, in partnership with the Vienna Institute of Demography, the Austrian Academy of Sciences and the European Large Families Confederation, organized a briefing on the integration of young people for sustainable development, entitled "Vulnerability and the future of families with children in Europe: nine questions and corresponding answers", which presented the results of the European Union project "Families and Societies".[25]

## E. United Nations Trust Fund on Family Activities

87. Over the years, the General Assembly, in some of its resolutions, has encouraged governments to support the United Nations Trust Fund on Family Activities. There have, however, been no financial contributions to the Fund in recent years. Research activities and the provision of assistance to countries at their request have also been encouraged.

88. The Trust Fund's resources have been used for research, awareness-raising, academic networking and advisory activities. Such activities have contributed to realizing the objectives of the mandate of the Division for Inclusive Social Development relating to the promotion of understanding and awareness of family issues by governments, civil society and the private sector.

89. In preparations for the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, five background papers on the themes of the anniversary, namely, family poverty, work-family balance and intergenerational solidarity, were commissioned and published electronically.[26] In addition, regional Expert Group Meetings and events relating to the anniversary were supported.

90. In 2018, a background paper on family policies and Sustainable Development Goals 11 and 16, entitled: "The role of families and family policies in achieving inclusive societies. Focus on Sustainable Development Goals 16 and 11: ensuring social rights through legal frameworks, participation, housing, and public green spaces", was funded by the Trust Fund and published electronically.[10]

91. The Trust Fund supports awareness-raising events on family policies and the Sustainable Development Goals annually. Currently, more activities are planned to

[22] See www.familyperspective.org/fpo/fpo-safs-en.php.

[23] See www.difi.org.qa/events/doha-briefing-focusing-on-families-to-support-the-implementation-of-the-sdgs/.

[24] See www.difi.org.qa/publications/integrating-a-family-perspective-in-the-sustainable-development-goals-sdgs-in-arab-countries-aspirations-and-challenges/.

[25] See www.oeaw.ac.at/fileadmin/subsites/Institute/VID/PDF/Publications/Schriftenreihe/VID_Schriftenreihe_23.pdf.

[26] See www.un.org/development/desa/family/category/publications/.

raise awareness and encourage action on family policies to contribute to the achievement of selected Sustainable Development Goals and their targets. Activities are also planned to support, at the request of governments, capacity-building on the development of family policies.

92. Member States and civil society, in consultation with governments, are encouraged to request support for family policy-related projects, in line with the guidelines of the Trust Fund, subject to resource availability.[27]

## F. Civil society

93. Civil society organizations continue to undertake activities contributing to the implementation of the objectives of International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes at national and regional levels.

94. As a member of the multi-stakeholder platform on the Sustainable Development Goals advising the European Commission, COFACE Families Europe took part in shaping the future European strategy on the achievement of the Goals, creating the European Sustainability Award and co-drafting a paper on the role of the European Pillar of Social Rights in supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

95. COFACE Families Europe advocates the support of the proposed European Union work-life balance directive, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 5, bringing together organizations of families of persons with disabilities. In 2018, COFACE Families Europe launched an advocacy campaign for the implementation of the recommendations resulting from the 2017 study of family carers in Europe and organized a European conference on building sustainable education systems.[28]

96. The Consortium of Institutes on Family in the Asian Region and other local stakeholders, including the Family Council of Hong Kong, China, organized the Asian Family Summit on the theme of "Sustainable development and family well-being", which was held in Hong Kong from 19 to 22 August 2018. The gathering provided a platform for public, private, academic/professional and non-governmental organization (NGO) sectors to map out an agenda for action for the well-being of families in the region.[29]

97. The Doha International Family Institute organized an Expert Group Meeting on family-sensitive social protection, held in Doha on 27 and 28 June 2018, focusing on children, civil society, development, policy, poverty, rights, well-being and women. At the meeting, evidence was presented that social protection programmes contributed to strengthening families' capacity to care for their children, improve children's nutritional status, decrease childhood mortality and reduce school absenteeism and child labour. Notwithstanding such efforts, social protection services do not reach many vulnerable families, including in the Arab region.[30] At an international conference organized by the Institute on parenting, child well-being and development, held in Doha on 23 and 24 October, the importance of investing in parenting programmes, laws and policies was emphasized. Participants reviewed various programmes supporting parents and practices promoting positive parenting.[31]

[27] See www.un.org/development/desa/family/technical-assistance.html.

[28] See www.coface-eu.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/COFACE-Families-Europe_Study-Family-Carers.pdf.

[29] See www.socsc.hku.hk/afs/.

[30] See www.difi.org.qa/events/expert-group-meeting-on-family-sensitive-social-protection-fssp/.

[31] See www.difi.org.qa/events/difi-announces-its-international-conference-october-2018-in-partnership-with-unicef-menaro/.

98. Generations United and the Eisner Foundation released a report entitled "All in together: creating places where young and old thrive", which highlighted intergenerational shared site programmes in the United States and the increased interest in such programmes in Singapore and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. A public opinion survey commissioned for the report found that 92 per cent of Americans believed intergenerational activities could help to reduce loneliness among all ages. Almost three quarters agreed that programmes and facilities that served generations separately robbed older and younger people of the wisdom, skills and talents found at each stage of life. The most common intergenerational model identified through the report was childcare/early childhood education programmes co-located with adult day care/senior living facilities.[32]

99. The conference entitled "Work-family balance: the forgotten imbalance" and a seminar were organized by Empowering Parents with the Child in Focus (HARO) in Stockholm from 18 to 20 April 2018. Possible improvements in family policy, in which parents are given more authority to make decisions about their children's care, education and development, were reviewed.

100. The International Federation for Family Development, in partnership with UNICEF and the Division for Inclusive Social Development, presented a synthesis report of the Sustainable Development Goals and families project in New York and in Madrid and Barcelona, Spain. In partnership with the Division/the Department for Economic and Social Affairs and the Regional Council of Veneto, Italy, the Federation promoted the Inclusive Cities and Sustainable Families Project to support inclusive urbanization and intergenerational relations. The fiftieth anniversary celebration of family enrichment courses in Catalonia, Spain, highlighted the role of families in development.[33]

101. The National Association of Large Families in Hungary organized a Family Congress, entitled "Family-friendly Europe", in Veszprém, Hungary, from 11 to 14 July 2018. The Association's two international programmes focus on engaging young people through professional training volunteering opportunities in family-oriented organizations and networking with similar NGOs by organizing events relating to family and marriage.[34]

102. The National Council on Family Relations of the United States organized a special session on international organizations and agencies that focus on family research and its application to family policies at its annual conference, entitled "Families and cultural intersections in a global context: innovations in research, practice and policies", which was held in San Diego, United States, from 7 to 10 November 2018.[35]

103. During the period 2017–2018, the New York NGO Committee on the Family organized many events that addressed topics, such as the role of parents in helping children to thrive, empowering rural women and girls, the importance of healthy father-daughter relationships, policy opportunities to address poverty in the family, strategies to foster family-friendly cities, the role of families to prevent and mitigate sexual assault and innovative educational initiatives for families and children. The Committee partnered with the Permanent Missions of Nigeria, Samoa and Viet Nam to promote the role of the family in ensuring successful global policies.[36]

[32] See www.gu.org/resources/all-in-together-creating-places-where-young-and-old-thrive/.
[33] See www.familyperspective.org/fpo/fpo-iffd-en.php.
[34] See https://noe.hu/our-activities/.
[35] See www.ncfr.org/ncfr-2018.
[36] See www.ngofamilyny.org/.

104. The Vienna NGO Committee on the Family organized two international forums. One, organized in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, focused on family-based prevention of risky behaviours, including substance use disorders and violence. The other, organized in cooperation with the University of Salzburg, raised awareness of socially disadvantaged families and digital media usage. The Committee also published its online quarterly bulletin, "Families international", incorporating forum proceedings and disseminating resources from United Nations agencies relevant to families.[37]

105. The International Day of Families remains a focus for civil society activities in many countries. In 2018, The Family Watch (*Instituto Internacional de Estudios sobre la Familia*) of Spain organized a round table on families and sustainable societies with the participation of the Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality and the President of the Spanish Parliament.[38]

106. Humanities Foundation in Poland carried out the seventh edition of a social campaign, "Two hours for family", encouraging the celebration of the International Day of Families by reflecting on the quality of family relationships. Participating employers offer their employees two hours of additional free time to spend with their families. The campaign has become a symbol of work-life balance under the slogan "One life — many roles" and, in 2018, was joined by companies from 11 countries.[39]

## V. Conclusions

107. Member States, United Nations agencies and civil society continued their efforts towards the implementation of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes through national strategies and advocacy, as well as prioritizing family-oriented policies and programmes. Practical interventions focusing on family and children's well-being have been seen as conducive to the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals and their targets.

108. Family-oriented policies for poverty, hunger and social exclusion reduction are an important part of overall social development strategies pursued at the national level. The provision of social protection for vulnerable families tops those efforts.

109. Social protection mechanisms in the form of universal and targeted cash transfers and child allowances contribute to poverty reduction, increased consumption and better access to education and health care, although the specific impact varies. The provision of universal cash benefits also serves as an incentive to register or document children, increases family investment and helps to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and exclusion.[4]

110. Evidence and evaluations have shown that family-oriented policies and programmes, such as family cash benefits, are mostly effective at reducing family and child income poverty, deprivation and food insecurity. Family services and counselling are important for child protection and intimate partner violence prevention. Both cash and services tend to improve school enrolment and participation, health and nutrition, labour market participation and gender equity.[6]

111. Family policy design requires that targeting criteria, and levels of cash transfers or level of services delivered, be determined on the basis of the full understanding of the competing family needs, levels of vulnerability and inequality, public budget

[37] See www.viennafamilycommittee.org/.
[38] See www.thefamilywatch.org/actividades/dias-internacionales/.
[39] See www.2h4family.com.

issues and social and community factors that can moderate the effects of such interventions.[6]

112. It is imperative to expand child and family-oriented social protection systems, in line with target 1.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals on expanding coverage. An important area of focus should be child and family grants, given that there is a clear evidence of impact, but relatively low coverage in most parts of the world. Social protection systems work best for children and families in which systems are strong and integrated.[6]

113. Importantly, poverty, in combination with other stresses inherent in family life, can increase the risk of child abuse, neglect and exploitation. That is why, beyond poverty alleviation, it is imperative that family-oriented policies and programmes address other social, health and psychological factors that are bound to undermine child well-being.

114. Moreover, it is important to design programmes, such as cash transfers, that do not reinforce gender stereotypes. Employment policies favouring women's access to labour markets should be accompanied by measures equalizing the unequal share of time spent by men on unpaid work. In particular, such policies and programmes are a useful tool to help to redefine the traditional roles of men and women to lower the burden of women's unpaid work by promoting men's role as caregivers and their participation in household duties.

115. Work-family balance policies focusing on improving working conditions for families with children, reconciling professional and family demands and facilitating the sharing of household responsibilities between men and women continue to be a priority for many governments and form part of their efforts towards greater gender equality. Work-family balance for carers of older persons or adults with disabilities, however, is a relatively new issue on the policy agenda, as is unpaid work, and both require more attention.

116. The promotion of social inclusion and intergenerational solidarity through the support of intergenerational exchanges and investing in shared sites has been pursued by Member States and civil society.

117. In the area of social inclusion, however, more action is needed to ensure legal identity for all, including birth registration, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 16 targets. Parenting education focusing on positive forms of discipline also requires more attention and investment at the household and community levels.

118. There are many barriers preventing the social inclusion of migrant families, ranging from political feasibility and racial, religious and gender bias to stringent language tests and high costs. It is therefore imperative to make family reunification policies and regulations more flexible. Socially inclusive policies for migrant families should focus on the elimination of social, economic and housing barriers and on facilitating participation in host country social and cultural institutions.

119. The issues examined in this report make it clear that many Sustainable Development Goals, especially those relating to poverty, health, education, gender equality and the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies, cannot be achieved through stand-alone approaches focusing on individuals without the recognition of families, communities and the societies in which they function.

120. Importantly, family-oriented policies and programmes designed to address specific Sustainable Development Goal targets often have positive spillover effects on the achievement of other Goals and their targets. For example, poverty reduction strategies focusing on families contribute to reaching health and education targets, given that families have more resources to invest in children's health and education.

In fact, the cross-cutting nature of family policies helps to achieve many development goals simultaneously.

121. International and national entities can cooperate in research activities to build a database to support the use of evidence-based family policy, innovation in cross-sectoral integration and implementation strategies. There is a need for more research, including in relation to the evaluation of family-oriented policies and programmes, to respond to the demand for evidence-based responses to the Sustainable Development Goals. Disaggregated data by family types, child age and other relevant factors is crucial. Moreover, evidence of scalability and the transfer of effective family policies is key, keeping in mind that specific family policies will work differently in various contexts.[4]

# VI. Recommendations

122. **Member States are encouraged to consider the following recommendations:**

(a) **Continue their efforts towards the implementation of the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up process as conducive to the realization of the 2030 Agenda;**

(b) **Invest in family-oriented policies focusing on poverty and hunger reduction, promoting well-being for all at all ages, promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all and achieving gender equality;**

(c) **Ensure that family-oriented strategies promote gender equality and the equal sharing of household responsibilities between men and women and recognize the burden of unpaid work;**

(d) **Invest in a variety of work-family balance policies focusing on improving working conditions and expanding flexible working arrangements;**

(e) **Promote peaceful and inclusive societies through, among other things, providing legal identity and birth registration and investing in parenting education as a tool to enhance children's well-being and prevent the use of violent disciplinary measures;**

(f) **Strengthen cooperation with all relevant stakeholders, such as United Nations entities, civil society, academic institutions and the private sector, in the design and implementation of family-oriented policies and programmes;**

(g) **Support the development, evaluation and monitoring of family policies and programmes to effectively respond to the challenges faced by families and harness their contribution to development.**